

## Message Text

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64

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

SAJ-01 OMB-01 IO-13 AID-05 /077 W

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R 260722Z AUG 76

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1783

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

FBIS OKINAWA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 10091

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT PINR CH SWEL

SUBJECT: FEI I-MIN COMMENTS ON EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT

REF: HONG KONG 9783

1. HONG KONG-BASED PRC OFFICIAL AND PUBLISHER FEI I-MIN ON AUGUST 26 TOOK THE OCCASION OF HIS PERIODIC MEETING WITH CONGEN OFFICERS TO EXTOL CHINA'S SUCCESSES IN SELF-RELIANTLY OVERCOMING THE EFFECTS OF THE TANGSHAN EARTHQUAKE. FEI ASSERTED THAT THIS EARTHQUAKE HAD BEEN A TREMENDOUS TEST FOR THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP AND ONE WHICH THEY PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS. FEI WAS PARTICULARLY COMPLIMENTARY TOWARD PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG, CREDITING HIM WITH PROMPTLY AND PROPERLY MOBILIZING THE NEEDED RESOURCES AND PROVIDING ON THE SPOT LEADERSHIP AND FIRST-HAND ASSESSMENT OF RELIEF NEEDS. FEI IMPLIED THAT HUA'S PERFORMANCE

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WAS EQUALLY WELL-REGARDED INSIDE THE PRC.

2. RESPONDING TO A QUESTION, FEI STATED THAT WU TEH WAS ACTIVE IN EARTHQUAKE PROBLEM SOLVING IN PEKING SINCE THIS WAS HIS PRIMARY AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY, BUT FEI'S FAILURE TO INDICATE ANY SPECIFIC MENTION OF WU'S ACTIVITIES SUGGESTS, AS USLO HAS NOTED, THAT WU TEH WAS NOT PROMINENT IN THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT (PEKING 1649).

3. FEI'S EARTHQUAKE STORIES TOOK ON A MORE SOMBER NOTE WHEN HE BEGAN TO CAUTION ABOUT LISTENING TO RUMORS AND STORIES "BEING CIRCULATED BY TAIWAN AND HONG KONG." THESE, HE STATED, FOCUSED ON TRADITIONAL CHINESE SUPERSTITIONS THAT NATURAL DISASTERS PORTENDED CHANGES IN THE LEADERSHIP, I.E., THE "MANDATE OF HEAVEN" THEORY (REFTEL). FEI, HOWEVER, ADMITTED THAT THE SUPERSTITIONS HAD FERTILE GROUND FOR ACCEPTANCE AMONG CHINA'S RURAL POPULATION. WHILE DECRYING SUCH BELIEFS AS "UNSCIENTIFIC," FEI HIMSELF ON AT LEAST TWO OCCASIONS FELL INTO THE SAME PRACTICE OF IDENTIFYING RECENT PHENOMENON AS INDICATIVE OF FUTURE CRISES. FEI CHARACTERIZED THE YEAR FOR CHINA AS ONE OF "NIGHTMARES", MENTIONING THE DEATH OF PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI, THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE AND YESTERDAY'S DELUGE OF RAIN IN HONG KONG. HE SUBSEQUENTLY INDICATED THAT HIS "REPORTER'S SIXTH SENSE" TOLD HIM THAT SOMETHING ELSE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE WOULD OCCUR LATER THIS YEAR.  
CROSS

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** SUPERSTITIONS, EARTHQUAKES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 26 AUG 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976HONGK10091  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** X2  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760326-1183  
**From:** HONG KONG  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760818/aaaaaoum.tel  
**Line Count:** 86  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** NOFORN  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** NOFORN  
**Reference:** 76 HONG KONG 9783  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 03 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <03 MAY 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <03 MAY 2004 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** FEI I-MIN COMMENTS ON EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT  
**TAGS:** PINT, PINR, SWEL, CH, (FE I-MIN)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006